

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of manipulating a bodily tissue, wherein the tissue is enclosed by a definable outer layer of the same or different bodily tissue, the method comprising:

locating an opening in the outer layer;

inserting within said opening to a point past the outer layer a distal end of a hollow cannula, said cannula having a proximal end and a distal end and having an elongated longitudinal axis, said cannula slideably housing an advancer coupled to a probe member, said probe member having a proximal end connected to the advancer and said distal end of said probe member connected to a tip, said distal end of the probe member capable of being advanced and retracted through a curved slot at the distal end of the cannula via longitudinal movement of the advancer within said cannula; and

advancing the advancer within the cannula and causing the probe member to be advanced outward from the curved passage at an angle between 30 and 150 degrees relative to the long axis of the cannula such that the probe tip travels and manipulates tissue parallel to the intersection of the tissue with the definable outer layer of tissue.

2. The method of Claim 1, further comprising locating an opening in the outer layer of a tissue within an intervertebral disc.

3. The method of Claim 1, further comprising guiding said cannula.

4. The method of Claim 3, wherein said cannula is guided by tactile feedback.

5. The method of Claim 3, wherein said cannula is guided by auditory signals or visual images.

6. The method of Claim 5, wherein said auditory signals are obtained by ultrasound.

7. The method of Claim 5, wherein said visual images are obtained by a method selected from the group consisting of: magnetic resonance imaging, ultrasound, and fluoroscopy.

8. The method of Claim 1, wherein said opening is naturally occurring or iatrogenic hole.

9. A method of manipulating tissue within an intervertebral disc comprising:
inserting an insertion device into the intervertebral disc along a first axis;
deploying a probe having a probe tip laterally from the insertion device within
the intervertebral disc along a second axis which is substantially transverse to the first
axis; and
manipulating tissue via extending the probe tip across or through said tissue.